

Roger Brooke Taney to Andrew Jackson, August 5, 1833, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

ATTORNEY GENERAL TANEY TO JACKSON.

Private

Washington, August 5, 1833.

My Dear sir, After reflecting on the conversation you held with me on the morning you left Washington; it seems to be proper that I should state to you without reserve my opinion on the present condition of affairs in relation to the Bank.

In my official communications I have already expressed my conviction that the Deposites ought to be withdrawn by order of the Executive, provided a safe and convenient arrangement can be made with the State Banks for the collection and distribution of the Revenue. And I have advised that the step should be taken before the meeting of Congress because it is desirable that the members should be amongst their constituents when the measure is announced and should bring with [them] when they come here the feelings and sentiments of the people. I rely at all times with confidence on the intelligence and virtue of the people of the United States, and believing it to be right to remove the Deposites, I think they will sustain the decision.

The obstacles which have recently come in the way of such a proceeding have without doubt greatly strengthened the hands of the Bank and increased the difficulties to be surmounted by the Executive. They have not however changed my opinion on the course proper to be taken. My mind has for some time been made up, that the continued existence of that powerful and corrupting monopoly will be fatal to the liberties of the

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people, and that no man but yourself is strong enough to meet and destroy it, and if your administration closes without having established and carried into operation some other plan for the collection and distribution of the revenue, the Bank will be too strong to be resisted by anyone who may succeed you. Entertaining these opinions I am prepared to hazard much, in order to save the people of this country from the shackles which a combined monied Aristocracy is seeking to fasten upon them.

But although it is my duty frankly to state to you the opinions I hold on this subject, yet I do not desire to press the measure upon you. I am every day more and more sensible of the power and influence exercised by the Bank; and I should feel deeply mortified if after so many splendid victories, civil and military, you should in the last term of your public life meet with defeat. You have already done more than any other man has done or could do, to preserve the simplicity and purity of our institutions, and to guard the country from this dangerous and powerful instrument of corruption. And after a life of so many hazards in the public service, and after achieving so much for the cause of freedom in the field and in the Cabinet, I have doubted whether your friends or the country have a right to ask you to bear the brunt of such a conflict as the removal of the Deposites under present circumstances is likely to produce.

With these feelings and opinions I cannot wish you to adopt this measure unless your own judgment is clear and decided that it is your duty to order the removal, and that the public interest requires it to be done. If you have any doubts on the subject I would advise you not to proceed further until the meeting of Congress. For although my own opinion is firm in favour of the removal as soon as the proper arrangements can be made, I have far more confidence in your decision than I have in my own. And if you determine against it, I shall most cheerfully acquiesce, and shall cordially support any other course of proceeding which you may think preferable. But if you should finally make up your mind to adopt the measure and should as you intimated find it necessary to call for my services to aid in carrying it into execution, they will be promptly and willingly rendered, and I have thought

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it my duty after what passed between us on the morning of your departure to give you this assurance.

I should greatly regret the necessity for any change in your Cabinet. You will do me the justice to believe that I do not desire the station you suggested. For as I have already said to you I do not think myself qualified even for its temporary occupation. But I shall not shrink from the responsibility, if in your judgment the public exigency requires me to undertake it.

I have now my dear sir laid before you all of my thoughts and feelings on this subject. And with cordial wishes for your health and happiness

I am with the highest respect and regard